

North Dakota Parks & Recreation Department

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release, Friday, Dec. 12, 2014

For more information, contact: Icelandic State Park 701-265-4561

Christmas Bird Count near Icelandic State Park

The 24th annual Christmas Bird Count near Icelandic State Park will be held Friday, Dec. 19, 2014. Participants will meet at the Pioneer Heritage Center at Icelandic State Park at 7:30 a.m. Participants can use the regular park entrance off Highway 5 to meet. All of the counts from the day will be tallied back at the center at 5 p.m.

The data collected from the count along with 2,300 other circles from the Audubon Christmas Bird Count will be reported to the National Audubon Society. This year marks the 115th bird count which runs from Dec. 14 through Jan. 5. The origin of the bird count started on Christmas Day 1900. Ornithologist, Frank Chapman, proposed a new holiday tradition, a "Christmas Bird Census", that would count birds in the holidays. This bird count grew popular over the years and is one of the longest-running wildlife censuses to assess the health of bird populations and guide conservation action.

This count will cover approximately the same area as the one conducted in the 1950s by the late Ed Bry, former editor of North Dakota Outdoors magazine. Ed conducted the counts while he was a game warden stationed at Walhalla. Participants will count all birds seen in a circle 15 miles in diameter. The center of the circle is at the northwest edge of Jay Wessel's Game Management Area, south of Walhalla. Walhalla is at the extreme north edge of the circle, Olga marks the west edge, and the south edge is about a mile north of Mountain and the east edge passes through Backoo.

Volunteers are needed to survey portions of the area by vehicle with birder Mike Jacobs of the Grand Forks Herald and Rendezvous Region Bird Club members. Others living in the count area are invited to participate by counting birds at their feeders or anywhere on their property Friday, Dec. 19. Counts should be called in from 4:30 to 5 p.m. at (701) 265-4561. Anyone with questions about the count should call the same number.

For more information, please contact Icelandic State Park Assistant Manager Char Binstock at (701) 265-4561.